

United States Senate

April 1, 2021

The Honorable Deb Haaland
Secretary
Department of Interior
1849 C Street NW
Washington, D.C. 20240

Dear Secretary Haaland,

President Biden signed an executive order on January 27, 2021 directing the Secretary of Interior, along with other relevant agencies, to submit a report within 90 days recommending steps to conserve at least 30 percent of our lands and 30 percent of our waters by 2030, commonly referred to as the "30 by 30 initiative". As you work to provide these recommendations to the newly-formed National Climate Task Force, I write to express my strong opposition to any effort that would undermine private property rights, significantly increase federally-owned lands, or circumvent multiple-use requirements on public lands.

To reach the 30 by 30 target, an additional 440 million acres of land would have to be set aside in the next 10 years. Over 98 percent of the land in Kansas is privately owned. Kansans are rightfully alarmed about possible implications for private property owners of any federal mandate to set aside vast swaths of land in response to this executive order. In addition to being troubled about diminishing private property rights, I am concerned taking farm and ranch land out of production will damage local and regional economies across Kansas. Agricultural and energy production is the most common use of private lands in Kansas, driving the state's economy and providing jobs and economic opportunities in rural communities. It is critical for the Biden administration to uphold the integrity of private property rights and recognize the important economic contributions of agricultural and energy production on our lands.

I support conservation efforts that improve our land, air and water while maintaining land use and production. Through working lands programs such as the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Environmental Quality Incentives Program and Conservation Stewardship Program, farmers and ranchers in Kansas are addressing natural resource concerns by investing in new technologies, improving land management practices and adopting new conservation activities. Further, the USDA Conservation Reserve Program and Agricultural Conservation Easements Program provide incentives for landowners to set aside the most sensitive lands not suitable for agricultural production. As Secretary of Interior, you oversee the Fish & Wildlife Service North American Wetlands Conservation Act grant program for landowners to help protect our nation's wetlands. These voluntary, incentive-based conservation programs have resulted in hundreds of millions of acres of land being restored, conserved and improved across the United States. Our nation ought to focus on bolstering these proven efforts to conserve land and water rather than embarking down the radical course of setting aside an additional 440 million acres of land as implied by the executive order.

The federal government already owns approximately 28 percent of the land in the United States, primarily located in the West. There is currently almost \$20 billion in deferred maintenance on the land owned by the federal government, which is managed primarily by the Department of Interior (DOI). This backlog in deferred maintenance has resulted in Congress passing legislation as recently as last year providing billions of additional dollars for DOI to care for the land it currently holds. It would be irresponsible for the federal government to acquire large amounts of new land to achieve the 30 by 30 initiative when it has proven itself incapable of effectively managing the land it currently owns. Additionally, a central tenant of public lands policy is allowing a variety of uses on those lands, such as livestock grazing, energy production and recreation. These activities can help achieve greater conservation of our nation's land and water, making efforts to reduce multiple-use practices on public lands contrary to the stated goals of the executive order.

I am concerned the 30 by 30 initiative is a catchy slogan that threatens to have real consequences on Kansans. Without additional details on how the Biden administration plans to achieve this goal, Kansans are left with extreme uncertainty and deep concerns. It is incumbent on the administration to provide Congress additional details on its plans to enact the 30 by 30 initiative. As you develop recommendations to fulfill the executive order, I strongly urge you to consider the impact the policies, regulations and mandates that will be required to set aside 30 percent of our lands and 30 percent of our waters will have on Kansans.

Sincerely,



Jerry Moran
U.S. Senator

CC: The Honorable Tom Vilsack, Secretary of Agriculture
The Honorable Gina Raimondo, Secretary of Commerce